FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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CHP OFFICER KILLED IN THE LINE OF DUTY

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – California Highway Patrol (CHP) Officer Dan Benavides was killed Friday, May 7, when the Cessna 206 patrol aircraft he was piloting crashed in a remote section of desert southwest of the Salton Sea in Imperial County.

The CHP's Border Division-based air unit, designated as Air-63, was en route to work a speed-enforcement detail on Interstate 8, when the El Centro Communications Center lost radio contact with its pilot, Officer Benavides around 9:30 a.m.

A military and multi-agency search and rescue operation for the aircraft was immediately initiated. At approximately 4:03 PM, debris from the aircraft was located in a rugged, mountainous, desert area near SR-78, west of Split Mountain Road by a California State Park Air Unit. Officer Benavides was pronounced dead at the scene. The cause of the collision is being investigated by the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB).

"No one can choose how they die. You can only decide how you live," said CHP Commissioner Joe Farrow. "By choosing a life with the California Highway Patrol, Dan chose a life dedicated to the service of the people of California. Each time he put on that uniform, he became a symbol of courage, honesty, and integrity."

A veteran pilot and 13 year member of the CHP, Officer Benavides is survived by his wife and 9-year-old daughter.

Officer Benavides was assigned to the Border Division Thermal Air Operations Unit as a fixed wing aircraft pilot. Officer Benavides had been assigned to the Thermal Air Operations Unit since July of 2006. His previous assignments included working in the Monterey, San Jose, San Diego, and Oceanside CHP Area offices.

Officer Benavides joins 215 other fallen California Highway Patrol officers who, since 1929, have given their lives in the line of duty to protect the community in which they served.

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